Class: 10th **POLITICAL PARTIES** **(Ch:6)**

Qno.1) State the various functions political parties perform in a democracy.

Ans. The following are the various functions political parties perform in a democracy:-

- **(i)** **Parties contest elections:-** In democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties. Parties select their candidates in different ways. In India, top party leaders choose candidates for contesting elections.
- **(ii)** **Parties form policies and programmes:-** Parties put forward different policies and programmes and the voters choose from them. Each of us may have different opinions and views about the policies whether they are suitable for the society or not. But no government can handle such a large variety of views. In such a situation, a political party plays a very important role by reducing a vast multitude of opinions into a few basic positions which it supports.
- **(iii)** **Parties play a role in making laws:-** Parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country. Formally, the laws are debated and passed in the legislature. The members of the ruling party follow the directions of the party leaders, irrespective of their own personal opinions.
- **(iv)** **Parties form and run the government:-** Policy decisions whether big or small are taken by political executive that comes from the political parties. Parties recruit leaders, train them and make them ministers, to run the government in the way they want.
- **(v)** **Parties play a role of opposition:-** Those parties that lose in the elections play the role of opposition against the parties in power by criticizing the government for its failure or wrong policies.

Qno.2) What are the various challenges faced by political parties?

Ans. The various challenges faced by political parties can be listed as under:-

1. **Lack of internal democracy:-** All over the world there is a tendency in political parties towards the concentration of power in one or few leaders at the top. Parties do not keep membership registers, do not hold organizational meetings, and do not conduct internal elections regularly. Ordinary members of the party do not get sufficient information about what happens inside the party. They do not have the means or the connections needed to influence the decisions. As a result the leaders assume greater power to make decisions in the name of the party.
2. **No transparency:-** Most political parties do not practice open and transparent procedures for their functioning. As such there are very few ways for an ordinary worker to rise to the top in a party. Those who happen to be the leaders are in a position of unfair advantage to favour people close to them or even their family members. In many parties, the top positions are always controlled by members of one family. This is unfair to other members of that party. This is also bad for democracy because people who do not have adequate experience or popular support come to occupy positions of power.
3. **Money and muscle power:-** Since parties are focused only on winning elections, they tend to use short-cuts to win elections. They tend to nominate those candidates who have or can raise funds for the party. Rich people and companies that give funds to the parties tend to have influence on the policies and decisions of the party. In some cases, parties support criminals who can win elections. Democrats all over the world are worried about the increasing role of rich people and big companies in democratic politics.
4. **No meaningful choices to the voters:-** In order to offer meaningful choice parties must be significantly different. In recent years, there has been a decline in the ideological differences among parties in most parts of the world. Those who really want different policies have no option available to them. Sometimes people cannot even elect very different leaders either because the same set of leaders keep shifting from one party to another.

Qno.3) Suggest some reforms to strengthen parties so that they perform their functions well?

Ans. Some reforms which could strengthen the political parties are as under:-

a) A law should be made to regulate the internal affairs of the political parties. It should be made compulsory for the political parties to maintain a register of its members, to follow its own constitution, to have an independent authority, to act as a judge in case of party disputes, to hold open elections to the highest posts.

b) It should be made mandatory for the political parties to give a minimum number of tickets, about one-third, to women candidates. Similarly, there should be a quota for women in the decision making bodies of the party.

c) There should be funding of elections. The state should fund election campaigns, thereby eliminating lobbying groups and unfair competition. This support could be given in kind i.e. petrol, paper, telephone etc. or could be given in cash on the basis of the votes secured by the party in the last election.
d) Ordinary citizens, pressure groups, movements and the media can play an important role by pressurizing political parties to bring in reform. This can be done through petitions, publicity and agitations. If political parties feel that they would lose public support by not taking up reforms they would become more serious about reforms.

Qno.4) What is a political party?

Ans. A political party is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government. They agree on some policies and programmes for the society with a view to promote the collective good. Since there can be different views on what is good for all, parties try to persuade people why their policies are better than others. They seek to implement these policies by winning popular support through elections. By competing in elections parties offer citizens a choice in governance, and while in opposition they can hold governments accountable. The primary role of the political party is to fix the political agenda and policies.

Qno.5) What are the characteristics of a political party?

Ans. The characteristics of a political party are as under:

(i) Political parties are groups of well organized likeminded people with the same views and opinions who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government.
(ii) The members of the political party agree on some policies and programmes for the benefit of society with a view to promote collective good.
(iii) Every political party has one common aim and that is to attain power in one way or another. For this they contest elections and try to win. If they single handedly are unable to win a majority, they make an alliance with other parties to form a coalition government.
(iv) Political parties try to persuade people that their policies are better than those of other parties.
(v) Parties are a part of society. They represent and support particular views or policies that would be supported by a part of the society and its interests. Thus political parties involve partisanship.